

"Joy as Tiresome Vandalism", with fascinating full-quality photos of surreal imagery and absurd and playful poetry.

*if p then q* is a small poetry press based in Manchester. Founded by James Davies in 2008, it focuses on experimental and minimalist poetry, "the more experimental the better." It does not have, however, a manifesto, though it is "clearly against certain ways of pursuing poetry." Their minimalist aesthetic is mirrored in the book design, a simple author name and title over a uniform colour. But books are not all they do, or plan on doing: as the submissions page says: "If you see your poetry as being published other than in a book, i.e. on a mug, etc, please explain in email. We are keen on these sort of ideas."

I asked James Davies to tell me more:

"The title of the press is a very distant allusion to Wittgenstein. I'd site him as one of the biggest influences on my own work. The term *if p then q* is a common one in mathematics meaning 'if this then that'. So after reading an *if p then q* title you would have the formula 'if this kind of poetry then this kind of experience': I'll leave the reader to fill in the exact word for the experience bit.

"I set it up to promote the work of poets who I thought were tremendous. I am growing more and more used to the idea that my own work as a poet is done holistically. By this I mean that I can get similar satisfactions from a variety of things to do with poetry: writing, publishing, organising events and reading. I'd say there are a number of people who feel this way."

Modern innovative poetry indeed functions like this, with a circle of writers whose readers are often also writers. Some see this as clique-ish, but the fact seems to be that innovative poets sell as many copies to their community of writer-readers as any Faber poet.

James Davies own work has received some attention from BBC Radio 3's *The Verb*, in particular *Plants*, which has a series of witty 'Unmades'. He is currently writing a book length poem "which picks up from some of the longer poems in *Plants* – a merger of the surreal, minimal, absurd and synaesthetic."

Tim Atkins' *1000 sonnets* is a set of 127 minimalist sonnets, a playful sequence, with lines left out (as the epigraph from John Ashberry suggests), and others taking you by surprise: "(Books written by mice)", and a "search for sideburnians".



American poet P. Inman's *Ad Finitum* is a collection of sparse poetry. It is reticent material, atoms of language spread across a page in a seemingly ad hoc manner, or in tight textual squares, betraying... well, nothing. And I suppose that's the point. It was a stimulating read for these reasons. Matt Dalby's blog (<http://santiagosdeadwasp.blogspot.com/>) discusses the work more fully.

Derek Henderson's *Thus &* is another humorous piece, an erasure of Ted Berrigan's *Sonnets*; notably still © Henderson, I always wondered how that works... The results are evocative, one wonders what has been left out, and have led this reader back to explore Berrigan's work. Nonetheless Henderson's pieces stand up by themselves.

Most recently the press has published Holly Pester's *Hoofs*, reviewed in our previous issue.

Forthcoming from *if p then q* is a collected works of P. Inman. "We're currently typesetting it which is a huge job but very exciting to see such a huge body of Inman's work in one place. It really highlights how important he is; I can't think of any better poet since Gertrude Stein. Craig Dworkin has written a comprehensive and highly insightful introduction for it."

Collections are also forthcoming by Tony Trehy and Matthew Welton.

This press' output is fascinating, as the majority of experimental poetry is. *if p then q*'s output is consistently humorous and probing. If you are looking for something different, check out <http://ifpthenq.co.uk/> for more info and order some poetry.



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